



## Blunden on Vygotsky

*"The whole process of becoming human is driven, from beginning to end, by the striving of the child to overcome the limitations to its self-determination and emancipate itself from imprisonment by its own drives. This drive for emancipation then proves to be the only genuinely human drive, the drive which knows no end and transcends all barriers." (p.12)*

Vygotsky understands the movement from quantity to quality, and he understands the pursuit of freedom as being the source and basis of human morality. In both of these matters, we are talking about the development of the human free-willing Subject, both individual and collective.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, in the Communist Manifesto, wrote that in the classless society, the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

A psychologist by the name of Mark Edwards, who has a blog called "[Integral World](#)", writes about Vygotsky and Piaget, as follows:

"In the end, Piaget's view of development is that of the internal maturation of individually located organising structures. As he puts it,

*"Actions, whether individual or interpersonal, are in essence co-ordinated and organized by the operational structures which are spontaneously constructed in the course of mental development." (Piaget, 1962)*

"... What really separates the two is that Vygotsky saw all higher development, i.e. non-

biological, as mediated through cultural artefacts and through the "accumulated products of prior generations".

This ties in with the philosophy of Andy Blunden that we have explored elsewhere, whereby all human activity can be understood as involving two or more people, mediated by an artefact, or plural artefacts. This typical unit of humanity, Blunden calls a "collaborative project". Edwards' diagram, above, illustrates this kind of always-developmental relationship.

In an e-mail, Andy Blunden has written:

*"I think Piaget is the icon for the point of view that children mature, and as they become ready, teachers have to deliver the child the ideas they are able to understand. So there is a nature-given process of maturation underlying the practice of teachers who only have to supply what the children want.*

*"Vygotsky turns this around. It is the interactions children have with parents and teachers, etc., which drive their intellectual development."*

### **Andy Blunden's lecture "Vygotsky's Theory of Child Development"**

*(See also Andy Blunden's definition of "neoformation" on page 7 of the text:  
"Neoformation" is a new – to the child, at the time - form of social interaction)*

Let us quote:

"So it is clear under these circumstances that it is the position of this central neoformation in the Zone of Proximal Development which is crucial if the teacher is interested in assisting the child in making a development, rather than in simply learning to do more things.

"On the other hand, during the long stable periods of development, that is precisely what the child needs. The central line of development is the maturing and consolidation of the central neoformation which characterises the whole stage of development. And during the early phase of that stage, while a child is still stabilising the neoformation of that stage, operating at the higher level is beyond the child's imagination and reach. This only becomes possible when the central neoformation has matured.

"So during the stable periods of development, the social situation of development obliges the child to strive to master the psychological functions lying within limits imposed by her social situation of development and as a result of this striving, the central neoformation develops and leads the whole process of development.

"Vygotsky assumes that carers and teachers will be aware of those psychological functions which lie within the Zone of Proximal Development, and which Neoformations are central and which peripheral. Appropriate instruction which promotes the striving of the child and the differentiation and growth of the central neoformation will assist development, whereas efforts to interest the child in other activity, which involves peripheral lines of development or are beyond the child's age level of ability, will not be expected to bring any benefit in development.

“During the latter stages of that stable phase of development, the child begins to be able to perceive new possibilities, and by assisting the child, the teacher or carer may be able to see that qualitatively new functions are coming to be within the child’s reach, and instruction should be directed at encouraging these new forms of activity.

“It is here that Vygotsky’s concept of the “Zone of Proximal Development” is relevant. Instruction may lead development, if, and only if, instruction assists the child in promoting the differentiation of the *leading* neoformation. Vygotsky proposed that what the child can do *today with assistance* (for example by asking leading questions, offering suggestions) or *in play* (which allows the child to strive to do what they actually cannot yet do), they will be able to do *tomorrow without assistance*. The desired “flow over” to different functions resulting from success in performing the given task will occur **only if the intervention has promoted the central or leading neoformation**. Otherwise, teaching by assisting the child with a task may help them learn that task, but there will be no flow over to development.”

In spite of the jargon, it is clear that Vygotsky has a theory of development. Piaget, on the other hand, assumes spontaneous development as a given. We will return to Piaget in the next item.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Vygotsky’s Theory of Child Development, Blunden, 2011](#).
- A PDF file of the reading text is attached
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).